

Martin Basin Rangeland Project

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FEIS)

Humboldt County, Nevada

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official:

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ABSTRACT:

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis conducted for the Martin Basin Rangeland Project. This project consists of the Martin Basin, Indian, West Side Flat Creek, Buffalo, Bradshaw, Buttermilk, Granite Peak, and Rebel Creek Cattle and Horse Allotments. The analysis of the current condition has found a need to improve the condition of some riparian resources and the need to maintain or improve the overall health of the rangeland. This proposed action of this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is to update management direction to move existing rangeland resource conditions within the project area toward desired conditions.

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) describes four alternatives for the project area. The alternatives are:

- Alternative 1 - Current Management/No Action (Continue grazing as currently permitted);
- Alternative 2 - Proposed Action,
- Alternative 3 - No Grazing of domestic livestock, and
- Alternative 4 – Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI) Proposal

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the final comment period of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and to use information acquired from the comments for the preparation of the Record of Decision (ROD). The Record of Decision (ROD) will follow the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' positions and contentions. [Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978)].



Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement. [City of Angoon v. Hodel (9th Circuit, 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980).] Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).

Send Comments to:

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Electronic Mail:

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(Please note "Martin Basin" in subject line of e-mail message)

Office Hours for Hand-Delivery are 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday – Friday

Interested parties will be afforded 45 days after the Notice of Availability (NOA) for this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) appears in the *Federal Register* to provide comments to the Forest Service for consideration prior to the issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD).

Executive Summary

MARTIN BASIN RANGELAND PROJECT

The Santa Rosa Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest proposes to authorize continued livestock grazing on eight allotments within the Martin Basin Rangeland Project area. The area affected by the proposal includes the majority of the Santa Rosa Mountain Range located in Humboldt County, Nevada. This action is needed to maintain or improve the condition of riparian resources and the overall health of the rangeland.

The proposed action would allow for livestock grazing that maintains or moves rangeland within the project toward a desired functioning condition. The proposed action is designed to provide for "adaptive management" that would allow for flexibility to respond to changing conditions.

Scoping letters were mailed to over 100 interested and affected parties. These included all grazing permit holders within the project area. In addition the Humboldt Board of County Commissioners was consulted as well as local Tribal Governments. There was a 45 day comment period and an additional 45 day extension was granted. A total of 29 comment letters were received, as well as a fourth alternative that was submitted by Resource Concepts, Inc.

Significant issues included impacts to Water Quality, Soil Quality, Sage Grouse, Fisheries/Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, Riparian Habitat (includes meadows, streams, seeps, springs and cottonwood), Aspen, Upland Vegetation, Noxious Weeds, Social and Economic Consequences, Heritage Resources, Dispersed Recreation and Trails.

These issues led the agency to analyze four (4) alternatives:

- Alternative 1 - Current Management / No Action (Continue grazing as currently permitted).
- Alternative 2 - Proposed Action.
- Alternative 3 - No Grazing.
- Alternative 4 - Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI) Proposal

Major conclusions include:

- Some riparian areas are not functioning as desired because of various impacts including livestock grazing.
- Meadows associated with some streams are reverting to dryer types because of various impacts including livestock grazing.
- Sediment levels in spawning gravels in some streams are higher than what is considered desirable.
- Cottonwood stands that are primarily located along streams have been substantially impacted and reduced from flooding, fires and livestock grazing.
- Livestock grazing is important economically to the local communities.

The primary difference between the alternatives is the timing and degree of expected improvement particularly in meadow habitats and cottonwood stands.

Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the responsible official would decide whether livestock grazing would be authorized within the project area, what standards would be applied and the monitoring that would be required.

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